



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Women Entrepreneurs Find Success with Upgraded Pickled Products



Ngoni Nenguwo

A member of the Mvuwo women's group in Arusha, Tanzania sterilizes glass jars before filling them with pickled products.

Members of the Mvuwo women's group in Arusha, Tanzania, come together on a weekly basis to make mango pickles, produce jam, and bottle honey, which they then sell to raise income for their members. Although the group is certified to process, pack, and sell their produce by the regulatory authorities in Tanzania, a year ago, they began facing problems with poor quality packaging that was affecting their sales. In order to improve the quality of the group's products and to expand their share of the market, Feed the Future, through the USAID-funded Postharvest Project, came to their assistance.

The Postharvest Project, managed by the regional office of The World Vegetable Center for Eastern and Southern Africa (AVRDC), is a research project funded by USAID that aims to promote improved postharvest practices and build farmers' capacity to minimize postharvest losses. The project is active in Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Cambodia, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and nurtures partnerships with universities and technical institutions to jointly solve postharvest problems identified through consultations with stakeholder groups, including civil society organizations. Through an internship program, AVRDC enlisted five agriculture students from the Esitpa Agricultural Engineering College in France to help the Mvuwo women's group resolve their packaging issues.

The proposed solutions included improving product labels to increase visibility and meet regulatory requirements, finding a remedy to the leakage of the pickles due to poor quality jars, and producing additional types of pickled foods to diversify the group's range of products. To test these solutions, the students designed a new label with the group's brand name and a new logo to create a unique identity. The new label also included a bar code and a certification logo from Tanzania's Bureau of Standards. To gauge public opinion and acceptance of the new logo and label, the students conducted consumer surveys in the local town of Moshi, interviewing 31 people about various aspects of the new product label. To fix the leakage problem, project participants conducted laboratory tests and found that by including thermo-sealing films, they could prevent future leakages.

The findings were presented to the women's group and were followed by a lively discussion about the various solutions and the feasibility of adopting them. The group was also encouraged to try out pickling new produce such as onion, okra, and mixed vegetables to diversify their product offerings.

Since then, the Mvuwo women's group has changed its labels and improved product packaging, making it easier to meet required standards. A representative of the group said, "Despite the challenges we initially faced, we've embraced the changes recommended by the Postharvest Project and are seeing promising results. Our sales have increased, and we're now able to better compete in the market." The group reports that sales have increased from 70-200 jars per week to 300-400 jars per week, and the participants continue making progress in the packaging, and distribution of their products.